



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ART AND PROGRESS

VOLUME IV

JULY 1913

NUMBER 9



MOORE PARK

LUXEMBOURG MUSEUM, PARIS

LEON DABO

THE "MOOD" IN MODERN PAINTING

BY BIRGE HARRISON

ANY thoughtful and discriminating observer of modern art can hardly have failed to note a marked tendency on the part of our landscape-painters to explore new territory in search of the material for their pictures. They are no longer satisfied with the merely picturesque. The effect under which a subject is painted has come to mean more to them than the subject itself—the "mood" more than the motive. The very term "landscape-painter" has lost much of its old-time significance, for the modern outdoor painter is just as apt to seek his material in the crowded city streets, in some smoky factory town or busy harbor as in the open country. His subject may be commonplace enough in itself, but seen under some rare and fleeting

"effect"—in the mysterious half-lights between day and darkness perhaps—it is transformed and glorified. That which was banal has become beautiful. Under the magic touch of an illuminating "mood," material which was originally worthless for artistic purposes has become the fit subject for an exquisite picture. Thus the modern painter depends less and less upon the ordinary effects of sunlight and gray-day for the lighting of his pictures. He has learned that the veiled and half-seen things make a stronger appeal to the human imagination than the commonplace and obvious facts of nature—however expert or brilliant the statement of those facts may be. Twilight and pearly dawn, moonlight and mist, the moments when things



SILVERED ACRES

JOHN CARLSON

are glimpsed rather than seen, now grip him more forcefully than of old. He goes his way with open and receptive mind, ever alert and watchful for the fleeting and illusive mood which means so much to him, and well aware that it dwells in most unexpected places and may be stumbled upon at most unexpected moments. And, if he have the true painter's vocation—if he be of the guild—no engagement will be sufficiently important, no pleasure sufficiently alluring, to drag him from the spot until he has studied and memorized that precious effect and stored it away in his mind ready to be transferred to canvas in the quiet of his studio later on.

But while good art suggests more than it expresses it must of course suggest something and suggest that something clearly. There is a point where absence of definition in a picture becomes mere obscurity. Just where is this limit? To the commonplace person, the unimaginative, the matter-of-fact, it is reached as

soon as any of the details are lost, any of the sharply defined edges blurred—details and edges—the obvious, in a word, being about all that a nature of this kind is capable of seeing and appreciating. A primitive person of this sort judges all things by their outside shell or husk. Remove that and he is hopelessly lost. He demands facts and requires that they be stated with sledge-hammer force. The dear old chromo, in fact, is his natural esthetic pabulum. But the more highly organized temperament asks of the painter only the soul of a subject—its essential elements. Given these his imagination supplies all the rest. To a sensitive nature of this kind a certain subject seen through the veiling haze of twilight has a far more poignant charm than the same thing seen in the full glare of day, with all its detail accentuated and insisted upon.

On the other hand, one of the greatest painters who has ever lived—Velasquez—was content to paint the ordinary peo-



DECEMBER TWILIGHT

JOHN CARLSON

ple about him under the ordinary placid daylight of his high-ceiled Spanish rooms, depending for the effect of his pictures upon the splendid power and competency of his brush. And, be it said right here, many thoughtful people hold this to be about all that there is to art. The subject, they assert, matters little, for the quality of a picture depends wholly upon the way in which the work itself is done. It is the manner, not the matter, which counts—the technique, not the motive. Yet need we necessarily accept this point of view without qualification or reserve? Let us see. Another of the world's foremost painters—Jean François Millet—was wont to say that technique should never open shop for itself—that it should always hide modestly behind the idea to be expressed. If the work of Velasquez is re-examined in the light of Millet's profound aphorism it will be found to meet perfectly its every demand and implication. Velasquez's art is great, not because its tech-

nique is apparent and on the surface, but on the contrary just because it retires modestly into the background; because it is so marvelously balanced and adjusted that one sees first of all the sombre Spanish grandées and the sober but beautiful children living and breathing upon the canvas. It requires a later and more sophisticated examination to discover, behind the living personality of his sitters, the master painter and his methods. Above all and before all Velasquez gives us the "mood" of his sitters—their physical and mental atmosphere. Now, if this same test be applied to a nocturne by Whistler or a dawn by Tryon they will be seen to meet its requirements as perfectly as does the work of Velasquez or of Millet himself. It is the brooding mystery of night in the Whistler and the faint breath of awakening nature in the Tryon which first appeals to us; and it is only a second examination which reveals the fluency and delicacy of their brush-work.



FLOATING ICE

BIRGE HARRISON

Indeed, it goes without saying that no work of art can be great without its craftsmanship is also great. But it does not follow that intrinsic beauty renders a subject unfit for pictorial use—that wherever nature has created a piece of perfect and finished beauty the sign of “hands off” must go up—that the artist must forever content himself with nature’s cast-off material. This were truly a Spartan creed, and as unintelligent as it is unnecessary. The difficulties in the path of art are already numerous and varied, and the wise painter will hardly add to their number by setting another barrier in the way. On the contrary, he will recognize the fact that nature is the source and the mother of all beauty; and, if, with the painter’s acquired craftsmanship, he is so fortunate as to have also the poet’s vision he will select the loveliest of her arrangements and then set himself to copy as sincerely, as naïvely and as religiously as ever he can just what nature has set before him.

If he choose to paint a fish with its iridescent scales all gleaming with silver and mother-of-pearl, that is good; and if he choose to paint an old, old man with shining white hair, and the strange, wrinkled beauty of age upon him, that, too, is good; and if he choose to paint one of the rare moods of nature when the veil of the commonplace has been lifted and she shows her true soul in some vision of unwonted beauty, that also is good. But if he deliberately choose to paint an ugly thing merely to display his craftsmanship he thereby stamps himself a craftsman only and not an artist. His work may receive the admiration which is always, and justly, accorded to competent craftsmanship, but it will never awaken the joy and enthusiasm which is the reward of the creator of pure beauty.

Now, just as each race sooner or later develops an ideal of beauty all its own, so each succeeding epoch gives birth to an art which reflects its own



NOVEMBER SUNRISE

LEONARD OCHTMAN

special ideals and aspirations. It does not create new beauty, of course, but it discovers in nature beauties which were hitherto unsuspected and invisible. Thus the true art of landscape-painting was not born until the end of the eighteenth century. The masters of the Dutch, the Spanish and the Italian renaissance, great artists as they were, and wonderfully just as was their vision in the diffused light of the studio, became strangely blind when they stepped across the threshold and out under the wide blue arch of heaven. They were utterly unable to see the pearl and mauve and azure harmonies of out-of-door nature, which have become the common possession of all modern painters—even the poorest. Their landscape was often beautiful in arrangement and admirable as a background for the figures which formed always the central motive of their pictures, but it was devoid of atmosphere, of vibration and of color in its true sense.

However, once Constable and Crome had opened the eyes of the world to the truths of out-of-door nature it was easy for other painters to see the new tonalities. The word went forth to all the nations of the earth, and first France, then Holland, then America, then Scandinavia and finally Germany, Spain and Italy saw the new light, and schools of plein-air painters sprang into existence everywhere. As a rule the artists belonging to these widely-varying racial groups confined themselves to subjects which could be painted direct from nature—effects of gray-day or sunlight; studies of snow, of apple-blossoms, of harvest fields; marines and russet autumn fields. But occasionally there came among them a poet like Corot or Cazin, who perceived that nature's choicest effects, the moments when she shone radiant in a veiling mist of beauty—came during the morning and the evening hours, before nine a.m. and after six

p.m.; and that her most beautiful effects were often fleeting and evanescent, enduring but for a few short moments at most. They were "moods," shifting and changing rapidly, and at each change transforming the same scene or motive into an entirely new picture. These painters produced a wonderful series of pictures of the dawn and of sunset, which the world could ill afford to lose. Following in their footsteps others and still others began to seek out and to paint the shy, the transitory and the hidden moods of nature—moonlights and twilights, effects of mist, of rain, of blurring snow, and a thousand and one other elusive effects which need not be enumerated.

A nation's art is its intellectual barometer. It shows with infallible finger the

mental drift and tendencies of the race which gives it birth; and the same law applies to the art of any given age or epoch.

This movement in modern art is therefore symptomatic. To a discerning student of sociology it indicates a like tendency in all other fields of contemporary thought. It parallels and explains our present devotion to the more abstruse problems of psychology, our tireless search for the mysterious sources of life, of spirit, of force and of chemical action. The artist simply keeps pace with the spirit of his times; but in so doing he is, we like to think, learning to speak in new terms of beauty, a little finer, a little more spiritual than any hitherto known to the world.

A BAS-RELIEF BY SAINT-GAUDENS

PORTRAIT OF THE CHILDREN OF PRESCOTT HALL BUTLER, Esq.

By GEORGE WORTHINGTON

As though the placid surface of the stone
 Were stirred by faintest, sweetest harmony,
 Have these two children, moving to its tone,
 Come rippling into being. Still attentively,
 To catch an echo of the melody
 That gave them birth, and to their ears alone
 Is audible, they gaze: about them thrown
 A grace o'erpowering in mastery.

Who was he that so moved us? Surely Greece
 Alone could claim him in her noblest day.
 About his brow was seen the encircling bay.
 No, here, but last night did his breathing cease:
 While working blindly in uncertainty,
 Are those who bid us view their nebulous pruriency.